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INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL TEAM VISITS JAPAN

CONDEMNS ARL AND FINGERPRINTING SYSTEM

An international ecumenical team, under the auspices of the World Council of Churches and the Christian Conference of Asia, visited Japan May 25-31 at the invitation of the NCC Japan to investigate the issues of the fingerprinting system as required by the Alien Registration Law (ARL) of Japan.

Members of the team visited a number of centres in Japan, including Sapporo, Sendai, Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe, Okayama, Fukuoka and Kitakyushu. They met with those who have refused fingerprinting, support groups, local and national government officials, defence lawyers at fingerprint trials, as well as church representatives involved with the issue. Most of those whom the team met were Korean residents in Japan, but they were also able to meet Chinese and other foreign residents who have refused to fingerprint.

During the time the team was in Japan, two young Koreans in Japan, Mr. PAK Dae-wi of Kawasaki and Mr. CHANG Hak-ryun of Kyoto, were arrested and charged with violating the fingerprint requirement of the ARL. Team members met with Mr. KIM Myoung Shik and Fr. Jules Raud, two refusers who face imminent deportation because of their stance. Mr. Kim, a Korean studying in Japan [see JCAN 631, 628, 625] has been told by Japanese authorities that he will be deported June 19. These and other cases indicate the crisis point the struggle has reached.

At a news conference and public meeting May 30, team members stated that "the system of fingerprinting causes humiliation and an affront to the human dignity of foreign residents in Japan." They said that the law constitutes a violation of the internationally recognized norms of basic human rights such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Human Rights, which have been ratified by the Japanese government.

Team members declared that the "myth of homogeneity of Japanese society denies the cultural identity of Koreans and other ethnic groups, leading to the virtual cultural genocide of those minority groups." They described the fingerprinting system as symbolic of oppressive forces in Japanese society which deny the co-existence of races and ethnic groups... The system is almost comparable to the pass law of South Africa."

Given the technologically advanced society of Japan, team members described as ridiculous the government's argument that fingerprinting is the only scientific method by which to prove identification. "The Japanese government should find a more honourable method to end this suffering and discrimination felt by the Korean minority who happen to be the major victims of the enforcement of this legislation," urged the team.

NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL Room 24, 2-3-18 Nishiwaseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160 Japan

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The team placed four recommendations before the Japanese government:

1. We call upon the Japanese government to abolish the system of fingerprinting, mandatory carrying of the Alien Registration Card and the criminal punishment of the refusers. We call for the revision of the Alien Registration Law, which is a reflection of institutional and legalized racism condemned by the international community as an affront to humanity.

2. We call upon the Japanese government to stop its policy of denial of re-entry and extension of visas to those who refuse to be fingerprinted.

3. We call upon the Japanese government to withdraw the court cases against refusers immediately and to end the harassment and intimidation of refusers.

4. We request the Japanese government to issue visas to missionaries invited by the Korean Christian Church in Japan.

The team made a special plea for the cooperation of the mass media to publicize the situation of the Koreans in Japan.

Message to the Churches

In a separate statement, addressed to churches in Japan, the team stated that they had become aware that the churches in Japan, both the Korean Christian Church in Japan and the Japanese churches, have expressed their concern by participating in and supporting the struggle of Korean and other foreigners against the unjust Alien Registration system.

"We take this opportunity to express our solidarity with fingerprint refusers, many of whom are Christian. We express our support to the churches and individual Christians in Japan who are siding with the oppressed and marginalized. We believe the challenge to an unjust law and the struggle to regain human dignity are important actions of Christian witness in this country.

No church, seeking to be loyal to the Gospel of Christ, can ignore the present repression of Korean residents, who live with constant fear. The New Testament assures us that none are preferred before any other in the sight of God.

We challenge you, Japanese Christians and churches, to continue to confront the brokenness of Japanese society, to review the history of Japan and to reflect upon the attitude of Japanese people toward other peoples. For the churches to do nothing in this matter is to reinforce institutional racism. We challenge the church to maintain its role as an active healing force in society by sharing the stories of Koreans and other minorities in Japan--their history, their experience, their involvement in and contribution to the richness of society in Japan.

We commit ourselves to make this issue known through channels available to us. We covenant to extend whatever support possible to encourage the on-going struggle in Japan. May God bless you in your ministry and in the struggle for justice and human dignity."

May 31, 1986

[signed]

Dr. Anwar Barkat

Director, WCC--Programme to Combat Racism

Ms. May-an Villalba

CCA, Minority Peoples' Project

Rev. KWON Ho Kyung

CCA, Urban Rural Mission

Ms. Sandra Severs,

Seminarian, United Church of Canada

Rev. KANG Eun Hong

Presbyterian Church, USA

Missionary Korean Christian Church, Japan

Mrs. Jocelyn Armstrong

General Secretary

New Zealand Council of Churches

Ms. Kuni Jenkins,

Chairperson,

Maori Council of Churches, New Zealand

A TEAM MEMBER REFLECTS

The women sat bent over their writing pads, laboriously tracing the complicated characters. Learning to write a new language at the age of sixty-five is no easy task. Yet, after a lifetime of feeling inadequate and handicapped by their ignorance, the struggle to learn has become a symbol of hope, a source of personal pride for them. In response to the visitors' probing questions about their lives, they responded with a torrent of questions of their own.

Why do we have to give our fingerprints? We've lived here most of our lives and we've never done anything wrong! Why do they insist on treating us like criminals? Why?

The questions, uttered with all the years of accumulated hurt behind them, shatter the stillness of the air. Their voices, raised with anger, give power to the stories of discrimination and oppression that tumble from their lips. The pain, so deep, is mirrored in the lines of their faces ... it is the pain of over 700,000 Koreans in Japan.

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war befall us, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." ... So they made the people of Israel serve with rigour, and made their lives bitter with hard service. (Exodus 1:8-10, 13-14)

There is a saying that there are no new ideas, only old ideas expressed in new words. Yet, in reflecting on my experiences as a participant in the recent WCC-CCA sponsored team visit to examine the Alien Registration Law and the fingerprint refusal movement, I can say that often even the words are the same. The thoughts expressed thousands of years ago by the Egyptian Pharaoh have been repeated almost verbatim by employees of the Japanese government in response to questions about the need for the fingerprint system. In the team's closing session, participant

Ed Kang, an American Presbyterian missionary to the Korean Christian Church in Japan (KCCJ) described some of what he had learned.

One thing really shocked me on this trip. Mr. Kamae, who used to be head of the Alien Registration section of the Ministry of Justice, was asked to define the meaning of ethnicity when testifying at a fingerprint trial in Nagoya. What is the difference between ethnic Koreans and ethnic Japanese? It can be defined, he said, by the willingness of bear arms, to fight for Japan in case of emergency. He added, "These Koreans are not the same ethnic people, and they aren't going fight for our country! If they arm, they would kill us!" ... And when we went on to Kyoto, we heard about the testimony at the Diet on the case of Nagano prefecture hiring a Korean as a primary school teacher. When asked to define what this ethnic difference means, the response was exactly the same: "Koreans are not going to arm themselves to fight for our country. In case of emergency, they would kill us..."

As a Canadian, I found myself at many times during the team visit both bewildered and hard-pressed to understand how nationality is defined in the hearts and minds of the people of Japan. Coming from a country where nationality is granted to all residents born there and where citizenship can be granted to immigrants without the total loss of cultural identity, I have had to struggle to understand what it means when one claims to be Korean or Japanese, and why, under the family registration system one cannot be Korean and Japanese at the same time. As the offspring of British immigrants to Canada, I see myself as Welsh-Canadian and the fortunate recipient of two cultural identities and two cultural homes.

This struggle to understand the depth of feeling that lies behind the words expressed by fingerprint refusers in laying claim to their Korean identity has helped me to realize that the sins of the past--the sins of Japanese imperialism--can't be simply wiped out be a blending of two cultures. Immigration to Japan was, for most

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Koreans, not a voluntary act, but the result of the total disregard by the Japanese for the sovereign right of the Korean people to independently determine the course of their own future. History teaches that we often must live with the consequences of past actions. Japan is slowly being forced to come to terms with the reality of a people originally brought here against their will, and today unwilling to relinquish their cultural identity while living in this land.

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.'" But the king of Egypt said to them, "...Why do you take the people away from their work? Get to your burdens..." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuses to let the people go..."

(Exodus 5:1,4, 7:14)

There are many hardened hearts in the Japanese government--hearts which refuse to recognize the evil of past and present, and the need for change. To pleas for substantive revision in the ARL, the national government has turned a deaf ear. In response to acts to civil disobedience, it has taken up measures which reflect what can only be described as paranoia--the threat of deportation and the refusal to grant re-entry permits to those wishing to travel outside Japan. That public order and obedience to the law have superceded the concern for the welfare of human beings is aptly demonstrated in the following exchange:

Team Member (TM): In Mitaka, Kawasaki and Tokyo, local government officials have refused to give the names of refusers to the police. Do you recognize that the ARL is unjust?

Government Official (GO): Local governments must follow the instructions of the Ministry of Justice.

TM: Yet Kawasaki, in attempt to change things, has not followed these orders.

GO: You can't just break the law! If the law is changed, they should follow the new law.

The movement to refuse fingerprinting and to question the validity of the ARL is often seen as a "Korean problem."

It is more accurately described as a Japanese problem because it reflects the inability of the Japanese to come to terms with the effects of their past colonial policies. Reconciliation is possible only if there is first a public confession of Japan's involvement with the displacement of the Korean people.

A central tenet of Liberation Theology is the belief that God has a "preferential option for the poor." To the marginalized to the oppressed, to those on the "under-side of history" comes the promise of the Exodus story:

the Lord said, "I have seen the affliction of my people... have heard their cry... I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and to bring them ... to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey...

(Exodus 3:7-8)

This word, which comes as hope to the Koreans in Japan carries an unmistakable note of judgement to the nation of Japan. This is the note of judgement I heard uttered with increasing clarity over the course of the team visit. It is a word uttered not only by Korean and other ethnic minority group refusers living in Japan but also by Japanese trade unionists, lawyers and church people. It is the word of the people calling the nation to account. Although the call is not heard by all, its existence is in itself a sign of hope for the future of Japan --a future in which the human dignity of all people who live in this land will be honoured.

--by Sandra Severs

[Ms. Severs, a theological student of the United Church of Canada, is working with the NCC Japan and its Centre for Christian Response to Asian Issues as a summer intern.]

**FREEDOM
FOR
FINGERS!**

NEW ZEALAND CHURCH LEADERS

VISIT JAPAN

[from May 28-31, 6 church leaders from New Zealand visited Japan. At the end of their short time in Japan, the following joint statement was issued with the NCC Japan Peace and Nuclear Issues Committees:]

We, the members of the NCC Japan Peace Committee and the NCC Japan Nuclear Issues Committee were pleased to meet with the New Zealand church leaders' delegation. We have been deeply impressed by the stance taken by the New Zealand churches on the anti-nuclear issue and the new partnerships you demonstrate to us: women and men, Maori and Pakeha [white], Protestant and Catholic, laity and clergy, humanity and the earth's resources. We respect the initiatives your country and churches have taken towards a non-nuclear future. This is for us a sign of hope and we would like to learn from your efforts for our work here in Japan.

We, the members of the New Zealand church leaders' delegation are honoured to meet with the NCC Japan Committees. We have come in a spirit of solidarity in your struggle for justice. We have come to seek your support in maintaining our anti-nuclear stand against the disapproval and negative actions of the nuclear powers. We want to share the news that the churches in New Zealand, at this point in our history, are in accord with our Government in its refusal to allow nuclear-powered and/or armed ships into our ports and its determination to keep New Zealand nuclear-free. We support our Government's efforts to join with other South Pacific nations in an attempt to form a South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, as a practical action which contributes to moves towards nuclear disarmament. This stand for a non-nuclear future has come about because of a grass-roots movement among the people of New Zealand. For the churches it has been an occasion for us to search for new insights, both theological and social. We have learned to listen to the indigenous people and to women, to gain new understandings of nurturing

God's creation.

Together we agree to:

- *continue opposition to nuclear testing in the south Pacific and elsewhere in the world;
- *voice our opposition to nuclear dumping in the Pacific;
- *express our deep concern that the disposal of nuclear waste in Japan will be in the hands of private companies;
- *to work to link nuclear-free Christian communities in New Zealand with Christian communities in Japan who may wish to consider declaring themselves nuclear-free.

In Japan we welcome the possibility of encouraging a "Buy New Zealand products" campaign as a symbolic effort to support New Zealand's stand.

In New Zealand we agree to share with NCC Japan Committees resource material used in the nuclear-free campaign. The Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga I Nga Hahi O Aotearoa (Maori Council of Churches) has a proposal to sponsor an international conference of people who share these issues in the south Pacific, and welcomes the participation of Japanese representatives, including those from ethnic minorities in Japan.

May 30, 1986

[New Zealand delegation:]

Mrs. Jocelyn Armstrong

Gen. Secretary NCC-NZ

Ms. Kuni Jenkins

President, Maori Council of Churches

Bishop Manu Bennett

Secretary, Maori Council of Churches

The Rev. Michael Thawley

Exec. Sec. of General Assembly of the Presbyterian Churches of N.Z.

The Rev. Fr John Fitzmaurice

Rep. of Catholic Bishops' Conference

The Rev. Bob Scott

Coordinator, NCC-NZ Program on Racism

SECOND NATIONAL
DISCRIMINATED MINORITIES IN JAPAN
CONFERENCE HELD IN HOKKAIDO

USA Teruyo, an eight-year old Ainu boy, spotted me in the hallway of Hokkaido's Shiraoi Academy House. Teruyo held out his arm beside my arm (sometimes mistaken for a polar bear's arm) and asked, "Which one is hairier?" It was a loaded question.

The Ainu (the word means 'human being') have been subject to Japanese invasions, oppression and comprehensive assimilation, aptly described as "cultural genocide." Now a mere 25,000 in number, they are a people teetering on the edge of extinction as a people. Among the many degradations they have suffered is ridicule for having more bodily hair than "real" Japanese. After hundreds of years of discrimination, Teruyo, a boy born in the late 1970's, was anxious about his hairiness.

I said, "I am definitely hairier."

"I knew it!" Teruyo happily cried.

I bragged, "Yeah, I definitely won this one, eh?"

During the 2-day field experience following the conference, we got to speak with an Ainu man, KAYANO Shingeru, who is one of four Ainu who are fluent in the Ainu language and knowledgeable of tradition and ceremony. Talking to about 20 of us, mostly other Japan minorities--Okinawans, Koreans, Chinese, Buraku--Kayano-san said that from the Ainu experience, the Japanese invasion of Korea, Taiwan and China and the atrocities committed there was seen as an extension of the Japanese treatment of the Ainu. The people were killed, their land, language, lifestyle and dignity stolen from them. Today, the commercial promotion of things Ainu by the tourist industry is continued exploitation, especially when one realizes carvings and souvenirs sold are almost all made by Japanese.

Kayano-san realizes that in order for the Ainu people to be recognized, their history and present plight must be known. Yet most Ainu with whom we spoke are very critical of the academics researching Ainu. They squeeze the people

of knowledge and then take their fancy reports back to Tokyo--either to file away or to fatten their wallets.

The 3 other Ainu experts are all 85 years or older, so 62-year old Kayano-san carries a heavy responsibility in his commitment to preserve the language--something he considers essential for the survival of the Ainu people, and any oppressed minority. Yet his bright enthusiasm is contagious and his 4-year old grandson, with his growing ability in the Ainu language, is a beacon of hope.

During the 3-day conference attended by about 70 participants, two issues kept recurring: assimilation and nationalism.

The issue of assimilation through intermarriage, Japanese education, intimidation and the belittling of culture was a common thread weaving its way through the conference presentations and discussions.

Koreans, Chinese and Taiwanese in Japan have also faced assimilation. Their cultures have also been degraded, their people forced into religious allegiance to the Japanese emperor, the speaking of their mother tongue and the wearing of their traditional dress forbidden. Many have even been robbed of their real names. The policy of assimilation of today is more covert, and possibly more effective in the long run because of its subtlety.

YUN Kyong Hae, a Korean in Japan, told of how in the nursery school where she teaches, the pressure to use the Japanese national anthem (Kimigayo) and the rising sun flag (hi no maru) at school functions is increasing. Both of these are associated with the rightist Emperor system (Tenno-sei) and increasing government-encouraged nationalism. For the former Japanese colonial peoples, the growing prevalence of the former symbols of centralized state power with its fundamentally racist ideology is a warning alarm.

The policies directed towards the Buraku people and the Ainu people is very similar. One is called the "Buraku Dowa Seisaku" (Buraku Integration Policy) and the other the "Ainu Kyudojin (cont'd next page)

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logoho" (Law for the Protection of Primitive People). Both are mechanisms for assimilating these minorities. If pursued, the Ainu and Buraku will be eventually swallowed up.

For the Okinawans, who have their own culture and language, to be forced to use the national anthem and rising sun flag is further insult and reminder of their situation as a semi-colonial state. Tens of thousands of Okinawan lives were sacrificed in World War II, their best lands occupied by U.S. and Japanese military bases. Today, their economy suffers first and hardest during slumps in the Japanese economy, and their culture and pride has almost been destroyed. From these experiences, the Okinawans are especially sensitive to the present efforts to reconstruct the Emperor system with its ultra-nationalism. The planned visit by the Emperor to Okinawa next year, the first in post-World War II history, is a critical issue. It will be a focus of next year's conference, scheduled to be held in Okinawa.

Though not always readily admitted, the fellowship that takes place after formal discussion has ended is usually a highlight of most such gatherings. Even after sharing in each other's pain and struggles all day long, the energy to join in dance, song and talk long into the night never flagged.

Twelve-year old LEE Sara entertained us with Korean changu (drum) and puche (fan) dances. The powerful Okinawan drum dance, accompanied by a sanshin (Okinawan guitar-like instrument) got everyone twirling wrists and dancing. All joined in the Buraku liberation song. A monologue by JO Sui Chin, a Chinese resident in Japan, had us in stitches. The twangy mouth harp, singing and storytelling dances of the Ainu were done by performers of all ages, dressed in traditional hand-woven costumes. An unexpected pleasure was the performance of a 3000-year old Inuit dance by an Inuit observer from Greenland. This too was sharing of struggles, hopes and dreams.

--Andrew C. Bartlett
Korean Christian Centre, Osaka

JAPAN-KOREA CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The fifth Japan-Korea Conference on Christian Education was held June 5-7 in Fukuoka, with 80 people participating, including 14 delegates from Korea.

The theme of the conference this year was "Problems and Views on Christian Education in the Computer Society." Addresses on the theme were given by the Rev. INUKAI Hiromitsu and by Dr. PARK Gun Won.

In the past, Japanese lecturers who have contributed to these conferences have been theologians or Christian Education specialists. This time, however, we elected a pastor of a small church in the Kyushu area to be a speaker. Dr. Park, a theologian from Korea, thus provided a different sort of perspective from that of Rev. Inukai.

Dr. Park stressed the need to build a new type of community which includes children as part of the church. On the other hand, Rev. Inukai talked about the perils of living in a computer society and the role of the church. He spoke of experiences as a pastor in a rural area, that is still feeling the effects of Kanami poisonous rice oil tragedy of the 1960s.

There were discussion groups on church, home, school and society and the problems of ministry, discrimination in Japanese society, the situation of youth in Japan, and the revival of nationalism and imperialism.

Two important fruits came out of this conference. First of all, it was a good experience in ecumenical cooperation. Participants came from six different denominations and three Christian groups. It was the first time all such groups had met together. The second was the exchange facilitated between Korean residents in Japan, Koreans [from Korea] and Japanese. All five Korean Christian Church in Japan congregations in the Kyushu area participated in the conference. (Their contribution as translators was especially appreciated!) They were able to present a united appeal to participants on the anti-fingerprinting

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struggle.

I believe that the Korean delegates were able to learn of a different style of ministry. It was another opportunity to share the reality of Korean people in Japan.

We Japanese were given many challenges by our Korean brothers and sisters, both those from Korea, and those resident in Japan. We were thankful for the opportunity to experience unity in Christ and taste again the forgiveness of the Cross.

--Ruth Shoji

NCC Christian Education Department

POLICE BREAK UP

RALLY IN SUPPORT OF KIM MYOUNG SHIK

500 people gathered before the Japanese Justice Ministry June 19 to urge the government not to deport KIM Myoung Shik, a Korean studying in Japan who has refused to fingerprint as required by the Japanese Alien Registration Law (ARL).

The protest was the most recent action in the campaign to prevent the deportation of Mr. Kim to south Korea. Such action would very likely jeopardize the safety of Mr. Kim, a poet and human rights activist.

On March 19 Mr. Kim was given a 3-month "grace period" by the Ministry of Justice. Officials informed him that if he did not fingerprint within that period, his temporary residency permit would not be renewed. That period ended June 19.

At 1:00 p.m. that day, supporters of Mr. Kim--other fingerprint refusers, Koreans and other foreign residents in Japan, members of Christian, labour and citizens' groups and concerned individuals--gathered at Hibiya Park in Tokyo. From there they proceeded to the front gate of the Justice Ministry some five minutes walk away. From that point on, those gathered were surrounded on all sides by police.

Upon arrival at the Justice Ministry, 5 representatives asked to be allowed to

present an appeal and and petition signed by 13,000 people to officials in the Justice Ministry. Four of the 5 were Christian leaders: Rev. NAKAJIMA Masa'aki, General Secretary of the Kyodan, Rev. OSHIO Seinosuke, member of the Kyodan's Japan-Korea Solidarity Committee, Rev. KANG Young Il, pastor of the Korean Christian Church in Japan and member of the NCC's Foreign Residents' Human Rights Committee, and Rev. MAEJIMA Munetoshi, General Secretary of the NCC Japan.

For more than an hour and a half the representatives attempted to present the appeal. Those behind the locked gates of the Justice Ministry refused to allow them to enter, would not accept or receive the appeal and petition, and finally refused to even talk with them.

Meanwhile, several hundred police kept strict control of the crowd. Police loudspeakers mounted atop vans attempted to drown out the words of organizers. Police requested and then demanded that supporters clear the sidewalk and disperse. Those gathered responded by linking arms and sitting down on the pavement.

By 2:30 p.m. police warned that if supporters did not disperse, they would take steps "straighten things up." Beginning at the end of the long line furthest away from the focus of the rally at the Justice Ministry gate, riot police moved in to break up the crowd. Wearing helmets and equipped with shields, police surrounded small groups of supporters and forced them apart from the main body. In this way, supporters were bodily pushed along the sidewalk and forced to vacate the area. After retreating to Hibiya Park for addresses by organizers of the appeal, supporters attempted to return once more to the Justice Appeal. They were met halfway with a solid phalanx of police and prevented from continuing.

As JCAN goes to press, it is unknown if Mr. Kim will be separated from his [Japanese] wife and their child to be deported. It is feared he will become the first person forced to leave the country because of fingerprinting refusal.

Editor: Patti K. Talbot
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